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THE
CHARACTER
OF
PERICLES;
A
FUNERAL ORATION.

Sacred to the
MEMORY
OF A
GREAT MAN.

Secundis rebus, dubiisque reclus.

HORAT. de LOLLIO.

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THE
CHARACTER
OF
PERICLES.

THAT common Saying, *Death levels all Men*, is not so true considered in any Light whatever, as in that of Reputation. The Fame of every Man, when he has breath'd his last, is at every Man's Mercy, there is no longer any restraint of Tongues, all sense of Character is lost, and he who was Yesterday the Idol of many, may be to Day, the scorn of all. On this Account as well as many others, the Great
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have reason to fear Death. Those who have never been distinguish'd in their Lives, creep to their Graves unseen, and as they lived unknown, are, when dead, forgotten. But it cannot be so with *Pericles*, his Name and Character will be transmitted to Posterity, every talkative Fellow will make it the Theme of his present Discourse, every impertinent Scribler endeavour to fix his Sense, or his Party's Sense of his Actions as the Opinion to which Posterity must subscribe. Yet perhaps we may say of him as truly as *Quintilian* did of as remarkable a Man; *Cum ab hominibus sui temporis parum intelligebatur, posterorum judiciis reservavit.*

It is said to have been a Custom of the great Court of *Areopagus* that when they met with a Cause too difficult for them, they were wont to save their Credit by adjourning it for a hundred Years. I could wish that such a Rule of Court were made in the present Case. It is certain that we form truer and better Judgments of the great Men who liv'd in past Ages than those who were their Contemporaries, and that
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we do them much more Justice, than to those who live in our own Times, or even such as have liv'd near them. The Reason is plain, our Passions mix less with our Judgments: And our Prejudices seldom interfere with such as we have not known. We consider their Actions with Candour, we compare them with each other, we make Allowances for the Ages in which they lived and having thus sifted the Matter with Care, we seldom fail of coming at, or at least near the Truth.

Let us then suppose *Pericles* as long dead as his Name-fake, let us lay aside all Spleen and Rancour on the one Hand, all Partiality and Adulation on the other. Let us consider him as a great Man out of our reach in every thing but his Fame, and let us treat that as tenderly for our Sakes, as for his, let us remember that his Character is not more in our Hands, than ours must one Day be in the Power of those who live after us; and let us strive as Judges to pass such a Censure as that no appeal to Futurity, may do him Justice at our Expence. Let us take every *Item* into the Account, let us

reflect on the Manner in which he rose, on his Behaviour in the Zenith of his Fortune, on the Accidents that attended him in his Life, on the Temper of the times, in which he lived, on the Motives which his Friends had to praise, on the Topicks declaim'd on by his Enemies. But let us put on neither Character, let us not study an Apology or suffer our Resentments to dictate a Satyr.

He was very happy in the Beginning of his Life, as well as fortunate in the Conclusion of it, for as he was not born of a noble Family, the Titles of which might have outshone the Lustre of his private Virtues, so his Descent was in every Respect honourable in such a Degree, as that there seem'd nothing strange or prodigious in the high Honours to which he afterwards attain'd. This ought to be consider'd as a singular Felicity, for had he been born of a superior Rank, it is possible he had not sate so high when Fate summoned him to another Life. His Fortune too was perfectly suited to his future Glory, for it was enough to bring him on his Way, he set out in the World with Money
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in his Purſe, and yet had nothing in Compariſon of the Expences of his Journey.

In the firſt Years of his Life, and while his Buſineſs lay with Books more than Men, he diſcover'd rather a ſolid than a ſprightly Genius, he underſtood the beſt Authors well, but he ſeldom quoted them, and was abundantly more attentive to what they ſaid, than to their Manner of ſaying it. He examin'd the ſeveral Schemes of ancient Government with great Application, and with a Penetration every way equal to it, he compar'd them with thoſe of later Invention, and from thence ſtrukt out thoſe Principles that guided not only his Exprefſions, but his Conduct; for it was an early Maxim with him *to ſpeak what he thought*, and to act as he ſpoke; ſo that if the Art of Diſſembling were really the Art of Reigning, there never was a Man worſe cut out for a Politician than he.

It was very remarkable, that the Friendſhips he form'd in the Dawn of his Life, were warm'd even by his ſetting Beams, and it might be very truly ſaid of him,

that where he once profess'd himself a Friend, he continued so as long as he lived. This some have ascrib'd to Temper, Habit, Constitution, and whatever else Envy takes as a Colour to avoid confessing Virtue. But it is very certain, that it was owing to nothing but a rational Benevolence, and the making an honest Use of a very retentive Memory. It was not in his Power to forget those whom he had intimately known, and it was not in his Will to remember them without doing them good. I could produce some Instances of Persons he remember'd at the Distance of an ordinary Life-time with more Kindness, than other great Men do those with whom they sup'd last Night. So that one may without Flattery affirm, that the good Qualities which adorn'd his Youth, he carried thro' with him to the last Day of his Life, tho' in some Places it is a little wonderful that he did not lose them in his Passage.

As he fix'd his Principles early, so he was not at all shy of declaring them, and that too, in a Season, when they were neither like to recommend him to popular

lar Applause, or to the Favour of the Great; so that from whatever Motive he acted, it is but just to acquit him of Self-Interest. As he began the World without embracing any particularly Party, he appear'd upon the publick Stage without courting any Patron. His Birth and Fortune gave him an Opportunity of shewing himself, where Parts and Merit will ever make their Way, and he was not often seen before he was sufficiently distinguish'd. It had been remark'd that he made no great Figure in his Academical Exercises and indeed it was no great wonder, for he abhor'd nothing so much as talking to no purpose. When he began to speak, it was frequently indeed, but always in Points of some Importance, where he had studied the Matter thoroughly and possessed it in such a Degree that Words follow'd of themselves. That he was more eloquent than other Men, I think all the World will allow, but I presume to remark that his Eloquence was not the Effect of a superior Power of Speaking, but of the superiority of his Understanding; by which I do not mean to pay him a Hyperbolical Compliment, but on the contrary
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to maintain a plain Truth, that his high Reputation for Speaking grew from his knowing perfectly well what he said and trusting to the Language of Nature.

As it was his Power of Speaking that rais'd him into Height of Character, as well as into the Zenith of Preferment, where it maintain'd him longer than any other Man, that either our Memoirs can reach, or our Histories record, so it is but just to examine this peculiar Excellence of his with Freedom. In the Vigour of his Youth there was nothing brisker or more lively in his Harangues, than in even his last Speeches, and he was so far from giving in those Days a Loose to his Imagination or the Reins to his Fancy, that it was observ'd his Coolness made him a correct Speaker from the beginning, so that it was his Judgment always rather than his Wit, that the best Criticks admir'd, tho' in truth he was no way defective in either.

He was singularly fortunate in his Manner of Delivery, his Voice was extremely tunable without being either effeminate or
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affected, and he managed it with as much Ease to himself, as Satisfaction to his Auditors, for he never sunk so low as not to be heard, or strain'd into the Rant of Tragedy; and yet never any Man avoided Sameness of Sound so much, every Period had a proper Cadence, so proper, that it seem'd as if he could have pronounc'd it no otherwise; and all this I am persuaded was not at all the Effect of Labour, of Art, or of Study, I mean as to his Diction, or the Graces of speaking, but the pure Result of comprehending perfectly what he spoke to, and striving to express himself clearly. I know not how the Expression will be relish'd, but it has often occur'd to me when I have heard him, that he spoke by Ear, and not by Rule; and to this I attribute that Character, which even the bitterest of his Enemies never denied him, that he was at once the weightiest and the easiest Orator of his Time; so that it was impossible to say which deserv'd to be admir'd most, the Sense he uttered, or the Fluency, with which he uttered it. His Conception was that

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of *Demosthenes*, and his Thoughts came forth cloath'd in the Language of *Cicero*.

His Parts were excellently suited to the Times in which he lived. Had he been born a Century before, his Freedom had probably been his Ruin; but as he flourish'd in an Age of Liberty, it was the source of his Preferment. He had no occasion to seek the Great, for the Great found it very soon necessary to seek him, and it was to this he owed his coming so soon into Places of Trust, and Offices of Dignity. He pass'd through many with surprizing Rapidity, and yet it was allowed, that he discharged the Duties of every one of them with a peculiar Readiness, that look'd as if he had been design'd for that and no other. This too was not more owing to his Genius than to his Diligence and Application. Whatever Part he acted, he was ambitious of doing it well, and studied it with such Assiduity, that he never fail'd of being a perfect Master, nor ever stood in Need of a Prompter. He directed those that were under him, and was not managed by them,
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and yet he did this without an Air of Haughtiness, and almost without assuming Superiority. His Instructions were delivered in the Language of a Friend, and he gave his Orders without that distasteful Stiffness that usually attends a Master. When he enter'd an Office, none were afraid of approaching him; when he left it, those who acted under him in some Measure regretted his Fortune, not that they envied his Preferment, but were sorry for a Change, which they knew must affect themselves.

It was the Multiplicity of Business he went through, which render'd him better acquainted with the whole Circle of public Administration, than any Man of his own, or perhaps of any other Time, for as he rose by Degrees, and from one Post to another, so he constantly retain'd a perfect Remembrance of the Business of the Office he left, as he quickly acquired a thorough Knowledge of that to which he was rais'd. His Abilities were strong rather than sparkling, and he contented himself with doing

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his Duty, without boasting of it, or taking the Pains to magnify his Services. It was by this Means, that while he had Superiors they were always willing to confess his Merit, and to assist it's Progress. On the other Hand, though he did not affect to court his Patrons he was always true to them, and if he did not pay them the highest Compliments in the sunshine of their Prosperity, he was always warm in their Defence, when either their Conduct was unjustly attacked, or their Persons in Danger. But if his Zeal was active and conspicuous, it was also steady and indefatigable ; he was never weary of well doing, nor was it ever known that he deserted those who preferr'd him, when they lost the Power of preferring.

This inflexible Attachment to his Friends was the Source of that unrelenting Resentment, with which he was pursued by his and their Enemies. They saw that there was no being rid of the Trouble he gave them, but by removing him from the Capacity of being troublesome ; for when
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his great Friends had lost their Places, he lost nothing either of his Spirit, or of his Affection for them; he oppos'd upon the same Principles on which he had formerly complied, and was not of the Texture of some modern Patriots, but continued still to speak in the same Tone; so that the new great Men found it equally impossible to take him off, or to take him in. It was in this Situation that they came to a Resolution of carrying things to Extremities, and of doing by Force what no Art could effect. It was not any particular Prejudice to the Man, but from a Principle of Preservation with respect to themselves, that they treated him as they did. Like the old *Spartans*, he defended the Pass of which he was possess'd, even when there was no Hopes of Succour, and therefore they were oblig'd to attack him behind, because there was no going on till he was got out of the Way.

His political Heroism gave an additional Lustre to his Character. His Adversity was but of a short Continuance, and yet the
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Shade falls so properly in the Picture of his Life, that it renders it infinitely more agreeable than it would have been without it. He shew'd his Parts before he came into Places, his Abilities while he possess'd them, his Steadiness by quitting them rather than his Principles, his Gratitude by defending those who bestow'd them, but still his Firmness and Intrepidity might have been doubted, or, at least, could never have been effectually known, if he had not been expos'd to this Reverse of Fortune. There was this Turn wanting to compleat his Title to Fame, and he made as right a Use of it, as if he had foreseen the whole Chain of Events that follow'd. In a Word, he never appear'd with greater Dignity in the following Track of continued Success, than in this short Season of Suffering; and yet he tasted therein all the Gall of Bitterness, and was tempted with all the Sweets that artificial Courtiers know how to present, when a Man is least in a Situation to refuse them. But he was neither to be crush'd nor caught; he pass'd thro' this Trial with Satisfaction to his Friends, with

Honour

Honour to himself, and with Confusion to his Enemies.

There was but a very short Interval between this dark Scene, and the brightest Prospect of his Life. A Time came when those who wanted his Abilities had both an Opportunity of employing, and the Power of rewarding them. In the Space of a very few Years, from being harrafs'd, persecuted, and oppress'd, he rose into a Condition of retaliating it upon others; but it did not appear that he preserv'd any farther Remembrance of his Misfortunes, than what was necessary to render him grateful to those who had been serviceable to him under them; for such was his happy Temper, that, though he forgot Injuries and Enemies, he never forgot the slightest good Offices, or the meanest of his Friends. When I say this, I say what every Body knows, what many will readily confess, and what none will have the Face to deny.

There was this peculiar Felicity attended
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his publick Administration, that the Wellfare of his Country visibly appear'd connected with his own; so that whenever there was a Time of Rest and Quiet, when Trade increas'd, Industry flourish'd, and Liberty was enjoy'd in its utmost Extent, then was he at the Head of the Councils, by which all these excellent Ends were promoted. It is a great, it is a strange thing to say, but there is still a stranger thing may be said, which is that the very bitterest of his Enemies cannot deny it. When he was in Power, his Country enjoy'd Plenty, his Countrymen Peace; but there are Seasons when Men grow tired of Quiet, and as it were satiated with Happiness; for alas! it is with States, as with private Men, Prosperity cannot be long born with a good Grace, or those treated with Gratitude from whom it is deriv'd. This, and this only drove him from Power, some Years after he rose to it; but what drove him from Power, drove his Country into Confusion and Distress: They grew wild with Wealth, and wanton with a long Peace, expensive Wars abroad, destructive Schemes

Scheme at Home, soon proclaim'd that new Pilots were at the Helm, or rather, that the Ship of the Republick was turn'd adrift. Amazing Description ; but what is more amazing, the Annals of those times declare it to be just, Posterity will read those Annals, Posterity must admit these Facts, Posterity will do Justice to his Memory, and why not I ?

In these Times of Confusion, in the Day of publick Calamity, when the Breath of Discontent had raised a Storm, terrible to those who had driven him from Power, the Sense of their own Danger taught them to recall him. It was a frightful Scene, and their Fears depriv'd them of the Abilities which they either had, or were conceiv'd to have ; and thus it came to pass that their Hopes, and the Hopes of a whole People hung upon ONE MAN. He came, he saw, he restor'd Quiet. His very appearing in Business, gave his Countrymen a Confidence that Things would go well, yet he contemned Clamour, he stifled (if he felt them) all Emotions of Resentment;

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he had not Recourse to Severity, he did not indulge private Prejudice, which he might have done, under the specious Disguise of publick Spirit; his Temper was cool, his Conduct calm, he applied the Remedies that were fit, for which he was barbarously charg'd with criminal Complaisance. But what Complaisance, that which a Physician is oblig'd to have for a Patient that cannot endure a strict Regimen, that would prefer his Disease desperate and deadly as it is, to a rigid Method. His Prudence suggested the properest Means of Cure, and without carrying things to Extremities, he brought the publick Concerns once more into a regular Channel, and establish'd in a few Months such a Serenity, as before he became Physician to the State, was not expected in many Years. Yet some there were that suspected him of Cruelty, merely because he took this Opportunity, to put it out of the Power of certain political Quacks, to do any more Mischief.

A long Season of Quiet succeeded to
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that Tempest of Affairs; it requir'd time for those Waves to subside which had lately run so high, and those that had but just escap'd Shipwreck were content to let their Cloaths dry before the Humour took them of getting into Command again. It was then that his Genius appear'd in its full Extent, that it fill'd the whole Orb of its Influence, and mov'd all things with Ease and Regularity. It seem'd as if Ambition had seen its Error, and turbulent Men had found out the Value of Rest; there was nothing heard for some Years but Declamations against Times past, and a loud Applause of those that had come in their Room. Those restless Spirits, that afterwards threw all things into Confusion, boasted when they first stirred, that they had disturb'd the most profound Calm their Country ever saw; they began with treating this as an Evil; and Metaphysicks, and History were ransack'd to shew, that there was no Difference between a State of political Quiet and a political Mortification; the People were provoked to Mutiny, that they might appear to be awake, and ex-

horted to go together by the Ears, that their Neighbours might be sure such a Nation was still in the World. It was some time before this Leven wrought; but in the Space of a few Years the whole Mass became sour, and a new Fermentation ensued, which I will not take upon me to describe. Be it the Task of those who rid in the Whirlwind, and were proud of directing the Storm; for my Part, Peace, and the Praise of *Pericles*, are the utmost of my Ambition.

It was said, and it was truly said by some, that he alone had a just Notion of Liberty, and knew how to diffuse Power in such a Manner, as that many might enjoy, and few feel it. Admirable Art, sublime Mystery of Patriotism, but never sure the Work of any Minister. It is an easy thing in itself, and the Experience of past Times make it still more easy, to gratify the Desires of a single Will, and to contract Dominion into a narrow Compass. But to extend Authority, to place it in the Hands of the People, or of their Representa-

sentatives, to be content with the Honour of bestowing and maintaining it, where, in a free Nation, it ought always to be; was *Pericles*, thine alone! Untaught by the Examples of History, or past Ages; it was conceived by thy free-born Mind, and executed by that Benificence of Temper which plac'd thy own Happiness, in seeing others happy. Yet glorious as this System was, this System was not to be avow'd; those who never did a good thing, knew how to give the best things ill Names, and call the only Means that were left of maintaining Liberty, Corruption. Infamous Name, but ill applied; Corruption is not in the Means, but in the End, and the best of Men have recourse to such Means, as will promote right Ends, how little soever they may affect them. Corruption, like moral Evil, has its Rise from him who receives, and who perverts the Gift. He who bestows, may mean well, and he who acts, may do well, and yet do it from an ill Principle, by taking that as a Bribe, which he might have honestly taken as his Due.

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There was but one Instance in the whole Course of his publick Life, that could afford a Colour of suspecting him of Severity, and that Instance, strictly consider'd and duly weigh'd, ought to acquit him of it ; there was an Evil too great to be born, and yet not legally to be remov'd, without Effusion of Blood. In this Case a new and extraordinary Method was us'd, somewhat violent, I confess, in its Appearance, but far enough from Violence in its Effects. The Evil was removed, together with the Persons of the Offenders, and this was all ; thus he chose rather to leave his own Character at the Mercy of their Friends, than to expose even the Bitterest of his Enemies to the Rigour of the Laws. I know not how this Account of the Matter will be relish'd, nor am I in much Pain about it ; it is the Light in which I see it ; it is the Light in which Facts have placed it ; if there are People who have a Mind to be blind, or to see double, I cannot help that. If there was any thing of Severity in this, it was really Severity to himself, for most certain it is, that
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many of those who declaim'd against the Method, in which so gentle a Punishment was inflicted, profess'd themselves ready to have proceeded to the greatest Extremities, if they might have gone in the ordinary Way. Whose Notions of Severity or Lenity were best founded, let impartial Men declare, Men who can distinguish between Forms and Facts, who think a few hard Words easier to be born, than as many hard Blows, and who measure Cruelty by what is suffer'd, and not by the Words in which a Sentence is express'd ? But of this enough, perhaps in the Opinion of many too much. Let us now proceed.

In a Country where Liberty is enjoy'd in any Degree, there will be Parties; in a Country where Liberty is enjoy'd in the utmost Extent, Factions will never be wanting. It was in such a Country he liv'd, and with such Men he had to deal. He was always of one Party, but never of any Faction. It was this that expos'd him to the Rage of all, and yet there was such a Mixture of Reason in the midst of their
 Resentment,

Resentment, that they endeavour'd to distinguish between his Person and his Office; and when they boasted of their Enmity to his Power, they boasted too of Friendship for the Man. A singular Circumstance this, a Circumstance worthy of Notice, a Circumstance that ought to be committed to Memory. What a Man's Friends say is hardly believ'd, what his Flatterers say, and who that enjoys Power is without them, deserves little Credit; but the Praises of Enemies are invaluable Panegyricks, because nothing but Truth can extort them. What was it that cost so much Trouble to the Murderers of *Cæsar*, but the Merit of the Man they stabb'd? what expos'd those mighty Patriots, to the Madness of the People, for whose Sake they said the Deed was done; but the Merit of the Man? Where Enemies and where Multitudes agree, we need not question the Verdict. In this Case the Point is clear, those who pursued him with Violence in publick, reverenc'd his private Virtues, and few, very few, push'd their Resentments so far as not to admit, that it would have given them more Satisfaction

faction if there had been any other Path to Power, than that they were obliged to take at his Expende.

There is an Instability in whatever is human, and Men are either cut off in the Height of their Fortunes, or outlive them. It is the common Lot of the Species, and it was his. But if there be as much Honour in a prudent Retreat as in a Victory, be it his. O what might be said of that Retreat! but I forbear; this surely I may say, that it was made with Firmness, and attended with peculiar Circumstance of Credit. *Marius* was justly deserted, his Cruelty acquits his Friends; but who can forgive those who abandoned *Tully*? yet *Tully* was abandon'd, and so has almost every great Man been, that ever fell into Distress. Yet consider'd in this Light, the Retreat of *Pericles* was a Triumph; instead of being deserted, his Friends attach'd themselves closer to his Fortunes; instead of being abandon'd on the Loss of Power, his Interest never appear'd so great as then. It is a Plea that will be urg'd in

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favour of the Age and Country in which these things happen'd; that when Corruption and Want of Faith were commonly charg'd on both, this Instance of private Friendship gave that Charge the Lie. It will be said, that there could not be that general Depravity, that total Declension of Manners, when personal Love, and the Returns of publick Gratitude, could assemble in behalf of a Man without Power, and depriv'd of it too, so large a Corps of Friends. It will be said, and it will be believ'd, succeeding Times will admit the Apology, when they find the Fact is not to be denied.

The last Days of *Pericles* were quiet as the first, and the Sunset of his Glory as peaceable and serene, as its Noon-tide splendour; he might boast as the great Man did of the same Name, when on his Death-bed, that *for him no Athenian had worn Mourning*; his Benificence, his Humanity, as they disclosed themselves with the first Dawning of his Reason, so they expired only with his Being. His last Care was
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for the Benefit of the Publick, and to their Service he dedicated even his Death-bed Pains. He lived a great, he died an amiable Man, Peace be to his Ashes; and may the future Possessors of Power manage it with the like Indulgence to their Countrymen, and thereby merit equal Praises. Be it far from me to scatter Reflections, or to make use of such an Occasion to revive old Feuds, or kindle new; but let not the present Age be displeas'd; that without any other Motive than that of doing Justice, without any other Hope than that true Judges will own, that some Justice I have done; so mean, so weak, so artless an Orator, has attempted the Praise of one, whose Virtues, even his own Eloquence, could hardly have express'd.

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